

prepare for trouble and make it double

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prepare for trouble and make it double

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Summary

Her target sits down across from her with blue and red sunglasses and smiles disarmingly.

"Hi, I'm Jack. Is there anything you want me to call you?"

"You know my callsign," Nikita says. She's never been asked what she *wants* to be called before.

"I do," he admits. "But it seems a little rude to only call you 'Black Widow,' especially when there's more than one Black Widow."

(Jack convinces Niki to come in from the cold.)

- Inspired by [There's Blood in your Web, Theseus \(wipe it out\)](#) by [spookyserpent](#)

Nikita has been on the mission for four weeks when she comes in from the cold. The warm air of the cafe blows in her face, bell jingling faintly to alert the workers that a customer has arrived. She orders a coffee and sits in the corner by the window, letting the warmth seep into her hands.

Nikita has been a Black Widow for nearly four years when she sees her mark. He's probably seen her by now. M15 has decent training. She knows she's exposed. He has a good shot from the rooftop he's on, and she knows he can make it. The coverup might be difficult, but a claim of a jealous ex-boyfriend will get into and out of the local news fast, living on as a story everyone else in the cafe tells their children.

Nikita has been surviving for twenty years when she thinks her target should take the shot.

The bell jingles again as her target walks into the shop, gun skillfully concealed inside his jacket. Even if she had known to look, Nikita might not have seen it without the Room's training.

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"I do," he admits. "But it seems a little rude to only call you 'Black Widow,' especially when there's more than one Black Widow."

The Red Room named her Nikita. She likes her name, as much as she likes anything. It is a symbol that she *survived*, that she is the *one* out of her class of twenty-eight. It is the name of a Spider, the name of a Widow. She wears it proudly.

... There has been more than one Nikita in the Red Room.

(Her first assignment as a fully fledged Widow was to observe the class of little spiders perform Swan Lake. A little spider named Nikita played the part of Odette.)

(Odette will never be danced as well again.)

Jack waits, patiently. She has thought for too long, allowed there to be a pause in the conversation. He knows that this is a weakness, now. He knows that asking for her name when he knows her callsign will throw her off. He will use this, he will pull her in like the fly she has learned how to pretend she is, and he will make her hurt for her foolishness.

"It's alright if you don't want to tell me."

His voice is kinder than anyone in the Room, and he did not take the shot.

She shakes her head sharply.

"Alright. It's nice to meet you," Jack says, and smiles. "I'm actually pretty hungry, did you want to order?"

The Black Widow ate that morning. She does not *need* food. She can go for days more without.

"I'll have a blackberry muffin, please," she says, quiet and demure and everything the Room tried to beat into and out of her simultaneously.

"Good choice," Jack says, although he has no idea what blackberries mean to any Spider.

He gets up, and goes to order. He still has not pressed her as to her name.

She smiles at him when he returns with a plate for her and for himself, kicking herself for letting her real self flow in. Her training works even on those who know what she is. If the guards taught her nothing else, they taught her *that*. A smile, turning her head a certain way, lowering her voice to sound more delicate... Tried and tested, a perfected performance of femininity.

"You don't—" he bites his lip, eyes flickering away for a second. "You don't have to do that."

"Don't have to do what?"

"The—" he gestures, clearly uncomfortable saying it. "Helpless little girl thing." He switches to accented Russian. "You're a Black Widow. I know you could kill me easily."

"*I am* a Black Widow, Jack Manifold," she replies in kind. "A monster of the night. All over Russia, parents scare their children with my existence. Eat your greens, don't talk back, don't sneak out at night, or a Widow will come for you. What, exactly, does M15 want with a monster whose hands are dripping red?"

Jack is silent for a long time. She has found a weak spot.

She does not press him for an answer.

"... You don't have to be," he says eventually, and she thinks he is genuine. "You could come with me and work for M15, yes, but that is not the only option. I could report you dead and you can make a new life somewhere, monster of the night or not."

"What makes you think I'm interested in leaving?"

Jack smiles. "I'm not dead yet, so there's that."

Hit. And a hit to a weak spot she thought had been eradicated entirely, and so left undefended. He *isn't* dead. She did not take the shot, either. She walked into this very cafe with the knowledge that he could end it, and he sat down across from her with the knowledge that she could end it. It feels like treason to even think it.

The Black Widow wants to leave the Web.

(She would have had someone to return for. She was looking forward to taking Nikita on missions, teaching her how to spin a web strong enough to hold eagles and delicate enough to slip around the throats of dictators. She would have allowed a smile, perhaps called her *Odette* or *little dancer*. She would return eagerly, if the unmarked grave's occupant had earned the title of Sister.)

(In their zealotry to prove that Spiders were more than flesh and blood, the Red Room shattered marble.)

She nods once, sharply.

"Alright." Jack smiles sadly. A victory he does not seem to relish, regret he does not stifle.

"To a new life, then, Widow?" He stands from the table.

"Niki," she blurts out. "Call me Niki." Is she a *child*, to break so easily after merely a question and a smile? A warm (blackberry, it was *blackberry*, for all that he does not know what she means) muffin that he didn't need to give? Niki wishes he would just hurt her, take her to his handlers and give her up to be racked and interrogated. *That*, the Room's training exercises would have prepared her for.

Jack smiles, and offers her his hand.

"It's nice to meet you, Niki."

Niki takes Jack's hand, and comes in from the cold.

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